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TWENTY PARAGRAPHS
ABOUT THE
WORLD CONFERENCE ON
FAITH AND ORDER

REUNION

By the

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Published by the Secretariat,
P. O. Box 226, Boston, Mass., U.S.A.

Copies of this pamphlet and of other publications relating to the World Conference on Faith and Order may be had free on application to the Secretariat, P. O. Box 226, Boston, Mass., U.S.A.

Contributions for the expenses of the work are greatly needed. They may be sent to the United States Trust Company, 45 Wall Street, New York, U.S.A., to the Rev. Ernest Jauncey, M.A., "Langdale," Telegraph Road, Heswall, Birkenhead, England, or to Mr. C. R. Walsh, Diocesan Registry, George Street, Sydney, N.S.W., Australia.

WORLD CONFERENCE ON FAITH AND ORDER

1. Origin of the undertaking.

Moved by the growing desire on the part of all Christian people that all our Lord's disciples may be one, that the world may believe that God has sent Him, the General Convention of the American Episcopal Church in 1910 appointed a Commission to bring about a conference for the consideration of questions touching Faith and Order, and to ask all Christian communions throughout the world which confess our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour to unite in arranging for and conducting such a conference.

2. Basis of the movement.

The invitation to participate in the World Conference on Faith and Order is addressed to all churches which accept the fact and doctrine of the Incarnation. Participation involves no surrender or compromise of any doctrine or position held by any church.

3. The conference method.

The disagreements between the churches are to be studied and discussed not controversially, but in an effort for mutual understanding and appreciation.

4. Spread of the movement.

By correspondence and by deputations, the coöperation of eighty-six nation-wide communions has now been secured.

5. The Commissions.

Each participating church appoints a commission of whatever numbers and under whatever terms it may desire, to coöperate in arranging for and conducting the World Conference, and especially to further the preparations in its own communion.

6. The Continuation Committee.

Members of the commissions, and other representatives of participating or invited churches, met August 12-20, 1920, at Geneva, Switzerland, where fundamental questions were discussed, and where a Continuation Committee was appointed, as broadly representative as possible, to carry on the preparations in conjunction with the commissions of the several churches.

7. The Subjects Committee.

A Subjects Committee, created by the Geneva meeting, prepared and circulated five series of questions for preliminary local discussion in 1920-1925, and has been charged by the Continuation Committee to receive and consider further preliminary reports.

8. Lausanne 1927.

The Continuation Committee met at Stockholm, Sweden, August 15-18, 1925, and decided unanimously that the World Conference on Faith and Order, to consist of about five hundred representatives of the churches, be convened at Lausanne, Switzerland, in August 1927, the exact date depending upon the probable duration of the conference, which ought not to extend into September.

9. Agenda for the World Conference.

The Continuation Committee has prepared an Agenda as the starting-point for free discussion at the World Conference, together with special standing orders to facilitate such discussion. A pamphlet (No. 41) consisting of these documents may be had without charge from the Secretariat.

10. Propositions of the Agenda.

The several subjects of the Agenda are accompanied by related propositions, intended not to

suggest conclusions to the Conference, but to connect its deliberations with earlier discussions on these subjects. The propositions do not represent the opinions of the Continuation Committee, which is composed of men of various communions and of different minds. The desideratum is concerted inquiry on specific points.

11. The nature of Christian unity.

The problem of disunion requires for its effectual solution the patient effort, under God's guidance, of all the churches in conference. The promoters of the movement for a World Conference on Faith and Order most earnestly desire it to be understood that adherence to the movement does not involve the acceptance or negation of any views, by whomsoever expressed, concerning the nature of unity or the mode of its attainment. Such divergent views are subject-matter for the Conference; their comparison and study are its purpose.

12. Discussion groups.

In preparation for the World Conference, the committee urges the formation of local groups, consisting of members of different churches, for the study and discussion of the subjects of the Agenda. No church will be bound by the discussions or the findings either of local groups

or of the World Conference itself. Reports of local conferences should be sent to the Secretariat, P. O. Box 226, Boston, Mass., U.S.A., not later than August 1, 1926, to be forwarded by the Secretariat to the Subjects Committee for information and action.

13. Proposals for Christian unity.

In many countries, efforts are in progress to unite two or more churches within the same national boundaries, and on a wider scale much is being accomplished for closer unity among Christians of the same name in different countries and for the rapprochement of some of the larger communions with one another throughout the world. Information has been gathered for distribution concerning these local and partial movements, because of the light and encouragement which they afford to the more fundamental preparations for universal Christian reconciliation.

14. The Roman Catholic Church and the World Conference.

While expressing cordial interest in the undertaking, as his predecessor Pope Pius X had done, Pope Benedict XV declared to the deputation which visited Rome in 1919 that as the teaching and practice of the Roman Catholic Church with regard to the visible

unity of the Church of Christ was well known to everybody, it would not be possible for the Roman Catholic Church to take part in such a Conference as the one proposed.

15. Universal participation.

The requisite mutual understanding on the part of the churches of one another's positions can be attained only as all the autonomous communions coöperate in the work of study and joint conference. It is earnestly hoped, therefore, that those churches within the scope of the invitation which have hitherto remained aloof because of misunderstandings or local conditions, may soon find it possible to appoint coöperating commissions.

16. Prayer.

The eight days ending with Pentecost (Whit-sunday) of each year have been appointed by the Continuation Committee as a special period of prayer for the guidance of the efforts toward Christian reconciliation.

17. Finances.

Money is immediately needed for printing and postage, the promotion of local conferences, translations, office expenses, and for the world-wide conference in 1927. Small gifts are welcome, but many more small and more

large gifts must be received from churches and from individuals. The American Episcopal Church made for the closing triennium an annual appropriation to enable its Commission to contribute substantially to the common fund of the Continuation Committee, and to prosecute the movement vigorously in its own circles. Several other churches have taken similar action, and it is essential that the undertaking receive wider and more adequate support from the participating churches and their members.

18. How you can help.

There is need for your prayers that God will further the effort for Christian unity and prepare our hearts and minds for reconciliation. There is need for ardent patient effort on your part to promote study and discussion, in your neighborhood, of the cardinal points on which agreement is necessary before corporate union can be attempted. There is need for your help in spreading knowledge of the movement, and particularly for the names and addresses of your friends, clerical or lay, men or women, who might be interested. There is need for you to read and think and pray about the World Conference on Faith and Order until you are not content to leave the matter to a few scattered persons who cannot bring so great a thing to pass unaided. It is

your business, the concern of everyone who loves our Lord and the Church which is His Body, to take our divisions seriously to heart and unite in the effort to understand and overcome them.

19. Officers.

Chairman of the Continuation Committee: the Rt. Rev. Charles H. Brent, D.D., Bishop of Western New York. *Convener of the Subjects Committee:* the Rt. Rev. the Bishop of Bombay. *Treasurer:* George Zabriskie, D.C.L., 49 Wall Street, New York City. *Head of the Secretariat:* Ralph W. Brown, P. O. Box 226, Boston, Mass., U.S.A.

20. Publications.

The following publications about the movement may be had without charge from the Secretariat, P. O. Box 226, Boston, Mass., U.S.A.

No. 14. *An Official Statement by the Joint Commission of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the U. S. A.* 1912.

No. 18. *Unity or Union: which?* by the Rt. Rev. P. M. Rhineland, D.D. 1913.

No. 19. *The Conference Spirit*, by a Layman. 1913.

No. 20. *The Manifestation of Unity*, by the Rt. Rev. C. P. Anderson, D.D. 1913.

No. 21. *List of Commissions already appointed.* The current edition contains lists of the members of the Continuation Committee and the Subjects Committee, as well as the commissions of the participating churches.

No. 28. *The Object and Method of Conference.* 1915.

No. 29. *A Manual of Prayer for Unity,* 1915. 38 pages. Single copies free. More, five cents each. Three of the prayers, conveniently printed on a card, may be had free.

Suggestions for the Octave of Prayer for Christian Unity. Beginning in 1919, new Suggestions have been printed from year to year.

No. 32. *Report of the Deputation to Europe and the East. Rapport de la Mission envoyée en Europe et dans l'Orient. Rapporto della Delegazione mandata in Europa e nell'Oriente.* 1919.

No. 33. *Report of the Preliminary Meeting at Geneva, Switzerland, August 12-20, 1920. A Pilgrimage toward Unity.*

No. 36. *Twenty Paragraphs about the World Conference on Faith and Order.* 1922, revised in later editions.

No. 38. *The Christian Way toward Unity,* by the Rt. Rev. Charles H. Brent, D.D. 1925.

No. 39. *Five Series of Questions for Preliminary Discussion* (1920-1925).

No. 41. *Draft Agenda for the World Conference on Faith and Order, prepared by the Continuation Committee at Stockholm, August 15-18, 1925.*

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By the

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Bishop of Oxford

(†June 11, 1925)

Reprinted from the Contemporary Review, London,
June, 1925.

REUNION.*

I.

IT can be said without exaggeration that "The Lambeth Appeal to all Christian People" is a landmark in the long history of attempts that have been made during the past four hundred years to unite divided Christian communions. Those attempts have been concentrated upon the task of reconciling existing differences, and start with the discussion of what differences are fundamental and what are not, or else upon the task of reuniting some of the divided Christian bodies. The Lambeth Appeal sets before itself and all Christian people the one plain purpose of creating one united Visible Church out of the existing differences; to this united Church, in fact, the different Christian Communions may all have some special contribution to make.

It is quite true that the Appeal begins by urging all Christian Communions to repent: to place themselves in the Presence of the One Lord and Master and to admit that each in its own way has failed to carry out His Will "that all should be one." Yet at the

* Some reflections suggested by *Documents on Christian Unity*, published by the Dean of Canterbury.

same time the Appeal implies the belief that in the Providence of God all these differences that have arisen, the different presentations of Christianity, may be used for the purpose of creating a Church more rich in experience, more fully equipped for the work and witness of Christianity than if these differences had never occurred.

It might be argued with some force that supposing East and West had never become disunited, supposing the great mediæval Church of the West had reformed itself and had preserved the principle and practice of General Councils, supposing then in England no occasion had arisen to produce Independents, Baptists, Congregationalists, Wesleyans, still, even so, we should not have had a Church endowed with so rich an experience or so well enabled to adjust itself to the manifold needs of society as it grows more and more complex, as a Church that can become united on the basis of all these historical differences.

That is the ideal which the Lambeth Appeal invites all Christian people to entertain and to find the way of interpreting in practice. Issued amid the movements and emotions of the year 1920, the Appeal, we see at once, is in line with the lesson, taught by the War, of an Allied Cause: with the principle that struggles to express itself in the League of Nations: with the development of the idea

of a British Commonwealth. In all these instances there is not only the sentiment of Unity but the deliberate purpose of giving that Unity concrete and visible form. Moreover, the "Appeal" comes as the natural sequel of certain significant signs of agreement between different Christian Communions that have marked our own lifetime, notably in the field of Christian Apologetics and the exposition of Christian doctrine.

So far, so good. It was not only legitimate, it was almost inevitable that the Lambeth Conference in 1920 should plainly declare itself for such an ideal and should ask all Christian Communions frankly to face the question — What would make it possible, what makes it impossible to give practical expression to this ideal?

II.

As soon as we begin to address ourselves, then, to the practical issue, the first and obvious question we put is — What are the marks of the Corporate Unity of this one Visible Church? What gives it its coherence and organic force?

The answer given by the Appeal is (1) The declared Profession of Faith as expressed in the so-called Nicene Creed and in the Bap-

tismal Profession known as the Apostles' Creed. (2) The Sacramental Ordinances instituted by our Lord Himself, Baptism and the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ. (3) A recognised Ministry receiving our Lord's Commission through the Church — ministers who are commissioned to be "stewards of the mysteries." This Ministry — so history and experience seem to prove — will be best secured and the life of the Church best served if it rests upon and springs from Episcopacy.

We are, then, brought immediately to the question: Do the existing differences of Christian Communion, which we say we are going to use for the purpose of creating the United Visible Church, make it impossible to create the United Church upon this basis?

As to (1), no difficulty is presented by the condition of accepting this Profession of Faith. Some difficulties appear to be raised by the question of the use to be made of the Creeds; for instance, whether they should or should not be prescribed for use in common worship? whether they should be supplemented and interpreted by "Confessions"? If so, what latitude of interpretation should be allowed? But these difficulties are not fundamental: they would not prevent Christian Communion from uniting: and, indeed, in a United Church, we may always remember, there is

no need to insist upon uniformity and there need be no hesitation in allowing freedom and variety.

As to (2) no difficulty is presented by the condition of accepting the two Ordinances as essential to the life of the Church.

When we come to (3) we reach the crux of the whole problem. I confess that after reading the memoranda and the results of Conferences put before us I cannot see that we are anywhere within sight of solving it: I do see that we run considerable risk of deceiving ourselves.

The practical question which raises the fundamental issue is — How is this Ministry — and notably this constitutional Episcopacy — to be commissioned in the United Church we have in mind? What precisely gives it its authority?

The completest answer so far comes from South India.* There we have seen going forward since 1919 a definite attempt to construct a United Church in full detail: that is, to effect the union of Anglicans with what is known as the South India United Churches. The South India United Churches was a fellowship formed between five separate Missions in South India, namely, the London Missionary Society, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions,

* *Documents*, pp. 278, ff.

two Presbyterian Missions representing the Church of Scotland and the United Free Church of Scotland, and one Mission representing the Dutch Reformed Church in America. So we have here a scheme of Union between Anglicans, Presbyterians and Congregationalists.

The problem of the Ministry for this United Church was presented in the question whether they were to maintain a dual system of episcopally ordained and non-episcopally ordained Ministers? If not — and it seemed a pretence to talk of a Visibly United Church under such a dual system — how is the dual system to be avoided? It is suggested that there should be a form of commissioning all Ministers alike: in this Service of Commissioning, representatives of Anglicans, Presbyterians, Congregationalists should all alike take part and should each of them be an essential element. This, it is said, would effect the purpose which all desire, of including in the Commission of Ministers elements which may be considered to be lacking on one side or the other. A suggested form of service for the purpose is given.

At this point it is impossible to refrain from asking two plain questions: — First, Do Anglicans admit that there are lacking on their side elements which would be made good by the co-operation of Presbyterian and Congre-

gationalist Ministers? Yes, it will be readily answered, "for the purpose of ministering in this larger united Communion." But surely we are deceiving ourselves. That answer never touches the real issue. An Anglican when he is ordained Priest is commissioned with the words "Receive the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a Priest *in the Church of God* committed unto thee *by the imposition of our hands*" — not in the Church of England, nor the Church in South India. Is it conceivable then that he will now go through a form of Commissioning, which means one thing to him: not a Divine Commission to minister in the Church of God but a working arrangement, and means something different and far more than that to those who co-operate in the Service of Commissioning?

The same ambiguity, I almost call it an invitation to quibble, comes out still more prominently in the proposals made by those who were discussing ways of recognising the Ministry of the United Church in Canada. Can it really be said that the Anglican Form of Commission to Presbyterians (pp. 266-267) is anything but the Episcopal Ordination of a Presbyterian? The form is precisely the form of Anglican Ordination, with the substitution of the words "this Office" for "the office and work of a Priest in the Church of God." It might well satisfy the Anglican

that the Presbyterian had now been properly ordained, but that is precisely what the Presbyterian does not mean and would heartily resent. The Free Churches in England have therefore most pertinently asked, "Are we meaning the same thing when we talk of accepting a Commission from one another?" And no answer to that crucial question is forthcoming. At any rate we may be sure of one thing: no visible unity is worth having, indeed it would be shattered in a generation, if it is produced by diplomatic language and is the result of political arrangement. All parties must mean the same thing and know that they mean the same thing.

My second question raises the issue in its most acute form. The principle of the historic constitutional Episcopate being accepted by all, who is to give the Bishop his Commission? Do we insist upon the Anglican form of Consecration being sufficient? or do we admit that for the purpose of his Consecration it is *essential* that Presbyterians and Congregationalists should join in laying hands upon him?

I shall be told — "*Solvitur ambulando*: make a working arrangement and get it to work; then trust to time, or rather the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to bring us to be of one mind." I should be less uneasy about the wisdom or truth of such counsel

if all parties concerned were made fully aware at the start of each other's purposes and all alike were able to declare that they are prepared in this cause to abandon if need be what they now hold to be fundamental in their conception of their Ministry.

The documents relating to the Eastern Church and to the Roman give rise to thoughts which it is wiser at this stage to refrain from expressing.

III.

The general effect of the study of these documents is to lead almost irresistibly to the conclusion that the attempt to embody the spirit of unity in the structure of a visible Organisation is premature. It is beginning at the wrong end. The wise as well as the most straightforward course to pursue at this stage lies along a less heroic line. I do not believe that "interchange of pulpits" or "intercommunion" at this stage is going to carry us forward one whit: all the time in both there will be the same ambiguity, the same sense of unreality which has impressed itself upon me after my study of "the Documents." Such a line is always evading the real issue.

There are two fields in which we can all work together and find true fellowship: and

no one will deny that work in both these fields needs to be done at this time more than any other.

First, we can collaborate in appreciating, in studying, in teaching the great fundamental truths of the Christian Faith. If in doing this we are brought face to face with the question—What do we mean by the Church? so much the better. We are more likely to work out the answer in sincerity and truth along the lines of thoughtful study to which all contribute than in any other way. Secondly, we can work together and indeed are working together in social service. Short of what is known as Sacramental Unity, nothing can be more encouraging to Christians, nothing will be more impressive than the witness of a Christendom so far united that all who confess Christ can stand together and work together for the highest ends of human living, for understanding and securing the principles of righteousness and justice in the relations between man and man, for social purity, for temperance, for the cause of the afflicted, the destitute, the fallen, for the effective administration of our laws, for establishing the principle of arbitration and conciliation as the means of settling disputes between nations.

If we get to work together whole-heartedly in these two fields, there is enough and to

spare for us to do in this generation. Cooperation in study and enlightenment, cooperation in giving effect to the right values in social life: this is the surest step in the direction of getting rid of what Bernard Bosanquet used to call "stupidity." After our time, if we have done our work well, our successors will be in a better position to decide the question which after all is the most fundamental of all, namely — Are we or are we not mistaken in trying to represent a Spiritual Fellowship of all Christians in terms of a highly organised Visible Church?

HUBERT M. OXON: